



## Veterans Home - Chippewa Falls

### Veterans Home Family Updates 12.4.2020

Dear Family and Friends:

Over the past several months, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented an unprecedented challenge for our community. We couldn't be more appreciative of your willingness to adapt to operational changes in support of keeping our veteran care community safe.

Since our last update, we have learned that the staff who was suspected to have COVID-19 is now confirmed to have the virus. This means we just have one active case.

#### Here is our current information:

Current <b>Active</b> COVID-19 Confirmed Positive:	<b>1</b> (one employee)
Current <b>Active</b> COVID-19 Suspected:	<b>0</b>
Cumulative COVID-19 Confirmed Positive:	30 (three members, three contracted individuals, twenty-four employees)
Cumulative COVID-19 Suspected Positive:	2 (one member, one employee)
Total Recovered Individuals:	30 (three members, twenty-four employees, three contracted individual)

Our COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Response Action Plan follows guidance from local, state, and federal health officials. It ensures we're doing everything possible to protect those who live and work in the Veterans Home. See below for the full plan.

As a reminder, testing for all members and staff for COVID-19 continues twice per week. In addition, you can currently conduct window and virtual visits to stay connected with your loved ones.

#### Safe Holiday Season:

We want this holiday season to be a safe one for you and your family. We understand how difficult it has been to be separated from your family for such an extended period during this pandemic. We recognize that it will be particularly difficult for everyone to maintain vigilant social distancing given how special the holidays are to all of us.

In years past, some members have left our facility to attend holiday celebrations with family and friends. We strongly discourage having anyone leave our facility. Given the critically high rate of community spread, especially in our area, and the fact that asymptomatic people are spreading the virus, any member who leaves is at risk of contracting the virus and bringing it back to the Veterans Home. We cannot emphasize enough the risk holiday gatherings pose to a person who requires 24-hour skilled nursing care. We urge you to strongly consider a safer way of celebrating this holiday season, rather than in-person. You can contact the Activity Department to schedule a virtual visit during the upcoming holidays at 715-720-6775.

**COVID-19 Vaccine:**

As you may have heard, long-term care residents and health care workers are to be prioritized for the COVID-19 vaccine distribution, so we hope to have more information to everyone soon. We will update you on these calls and emails when we have clarification.

**Questions:**

Thank you for entrusting the Veterans Home to serve your loved one. If you have any questions, contact Katie Plendl at 715-720-6775 or [Veterans.Home-CF@dva.wi.gov](mailto:Veterans.Home-CF@dva.wi.gov).

Sincerely,  
Megan Corcoran

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**Veterans Home COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Response Action Plan**

First and foremost, our priority is to keep everyone safe and healthy. We are in close contact with our medical director, WDVA, other providers, and state and local health officials to ensure we are taking all appropriate steps at this time. We are following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and state and local health officials to protect our members and staff from this virus, and are taking every action possible to prevent it from spreading in our care community.

The following is a summary of our COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Response Action Plan.

- Utilizing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), as directed by CMS guidelines. Staff continues to wear PPE, including masks, eye protection, gloves, and gowns depending on the community's COVID-19 status. Members are asked to wear a face covering when interfacing with others or when out of their rooms.
- Screening and monitoring members and staff for symptoms. We have increased our screening and monitoring of members and staff for COVID-19 symptoms. COVID-19 symptoms include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea.

We all play a part in keeping ourselves and others healthy. Please wash your hands often, avoid touching your face, cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, wear a mask or face covering, and practice social distancing.

We continue to educate members and staff on COVID-19. For additional information, please visit the CDC's website at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html) or the Wisconsin Department of Health's website at [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov).

- Tracing individuals who come in contact with anyone affected. The community will work with the tracing staff from state and local health departments to assess all who may have come in close contact with an affected individual. We will continue to follow all requirements in implementing the next steps which may include self-monitoring as determined by health officials.

- Testing members and staff for COVID-19. We are following all guidance from federal, state and local health officials on testing required for members and staff. The frequency of routine testing is determined based on the number of COVID-19 cases in the local county. Additionally, those who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms are tested to quickly identify and isolate members and staff who may be positive for COVID-19. Once there is a confirmed COVID-19 case, testing is increased to every three to seven days until testing identifies no new cases of COVID-19 infection among staff or members for a period of at least 14 days since the most recent positive result.
- Quarantining COVID-19 positive members and implementing enhanced infection control measures. We have established a designated area in the building for any COVID-19 positive members, and they are cared for and supported by designated staff. We continue to follow all infection control protocols as outlined by the CDC, CMS, and state and local health officials. COVID-19 positive members remain in quarantine until well and cleared by medical professionals, as well as meet the CDC symptom-based criteria for return to normal activity.
- Advising COVID-19 positive staff to take all appropriate measures. For the health and well-being of our care community, any staff member with a COVID-19 diagnosis is asked to quarantine at home, contact a medical provider for care, and notify their supervisor. We are following CDC guidance on the return-to-work criteria for health care professionals with confirmed COVID-19.
- Taking environmental safety precautions. Housekeeping staff continues to take extra measures to clean and disinfect all high-touch areas throughout the building. This includes countertops and tables, faucet handles, toilet flush handles, doorknobs, door handles, crash bars, bathroom and kitchen areas, elevator call buttons, and handrails.
- Adhering to safe visitation procedures. We are committed to offering visitation that supports each member's physical, mental, psychosocial well-being, and quality of life. Visitation may be conducted through different means based on the community's structure and members' needs, such as in member rooms, dedicated visitation spaces, outdoors, and for circumstances beyond compassionate care situations.

**Please know the visitation options may vary based on the community's COVID-19 status. To discuss current visit options and schedule a visit with a loved one, contact Katie Plendl at 715-720-6775 or at [Veterans.Home-CF@dva.wi.gov](mailto:Veterans.Home-CF@dva.wi.gov). Currently as of today, closed window visits and virtual visits are available. No reservation is needed for window visits.**

*Closed Window Visits:* Closed window visits pose no risk of virus transmission.

*Outdoor Visits:* Outdoor visits pose a lower risk of virus transmission due to increased space and airflow. Therefore, outdoor visits are preferred whenever practicable.

*Indoor Visits:* Indoor visits will be offered based on the following guidance and criteria from CMS:

- The community has had no new onset of COVID-19 cases in the last 14 days and is not currently conducting outbreak testing.
- Visitors must adhere to the core principles of infection control and will be monitored by staff, including appropriate mask use, social distancing, and hand hygiene.
- For the safety and well-being of those in the community, there are a limited number of visitors allowed at one time. Two visitors per member can be accommodated. Visits will generally take place in a common area inside the community that is cleaned and sanitized

regularly and between visits. Additionally, the community maintains a calendar that identifies the days, times, and length of potential visits.

*Virtual visits:* We encourage loved ones to communicate with members by phone, letters, video chat, and/or social media. We understand that it is hard to not have visitors, especially family. Please contact the community at 715-720-6775 for questions or assistance with these communication methods.

*Compassionate care visits:* Visitors who need to enter the community for compassionate care situations are evaluated on a case-by-case basis to assure safety for all.

*Please note the community will screen visitors for COVID-19 when they arrive for outdoor, indoor, and compassionate care visits.*

We are excited to see our members reunite with their loved ones when able!

- Assuring safe congregate dining and group activities. Communal dining and congregate group activities may be offered while adhering to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention. This includes social distancing, face covering, and appropriate hand hygiene by members and staff.

We continue to be in close communications with our medical director, WDVA, other providers, and state and local health officials. We are also monitoring new information from the CDC, CMS, and state and local health departments to ensure we are taking the appropriate next steps.

Thank you for your support and understanding; we are all in this together. Please do not hesitate to contact Katie Plendl, Director of Admissions and Marketing at 715-720-6775 or [Veterans.Home-CF@dva.wi.gov](mailto:Veterans.Home-CF@dva.wi.gov) with any questions or concerns you may have.

Best,



**Megan M. Corcoran, NHA** | Administrator  
Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls